



September 20, 2018

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Re: SWG-2013-00147
Freeport LNG Development, L.P.

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) has reviewed the public notice, issued August 21, 2018, for a proposed modification to permit number SWG-2013-00147. The applicant requests authorization to construct and operate a private placement area (PA) for disposal of maintenance dredge material as the preferred alternative to their previously permitted offshore disposal. Routine maintenance dredging would generate 500,000 cubic yards of material annually for a 15-year period. The project site is located east of County Road 7164 and south of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) – Galveston District's PA 1 in Freeport, Brazoria County, Texas. The proposed project would permanently impact about 193.8 acres of estuarine wetlands. Compensation for wetland impacts is proposed as restoration of freshwater, herbaceous wetlands near Bastrop Bayou.

TPWD participated in a site visit on September 7, 2018 with the applicant's environmental consultant and staff from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The 196.5-acre project area is an undeveloped tract. Habitat at the site consists almost entirely of brackish marsh, and the attachment lists the plant species observed by TPWD. A Great Egret *Ardea alba* and Sheepshead Minnows *Cyprinodon variegatus* were also observed.

Three mapping designations support TPWD's on-the-ground characterization of the proposed PA site's habitat as estuarine-type wetland. First, about 90% of the site is mapped as Velasco clay soil, and Crenwelge et al. (1981) described the native vegetation of this soil as "that of a salt marsh." Second, the Ecological Mapping Systems of Texas (Elliott et al. 2014; <https://tpwd.texas.gov/gis/team>) identifies the entirety of the site as "Texas Coast Salt and Brackish Tidal Marsh." Third, Enwright et al. (2014) identifies the site as saline and brackish marsh.

TPWD is concerned that the proposed permittee-responsible mitigation (PRM) plan is out-of-kind and will not appropriately compensate for loss of estuarine wetland functions. The PRM site is located in a coastal prairie landscape setting. Indeed, Section 2.0 of the proposed PRM plan states that the site would "restore the natural historical herbaceous prairie wetland habitat." In addition, none of the 27 species proposed for planting, except for *Spartina patens*, occur at the proposed PA site.

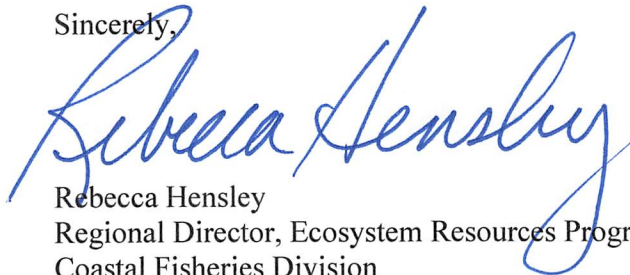
Recommendations:

- The applicant revise their compensatory mitigation by developing an estuarine wetland PRM plan located within the EPA Level IV Mid-Coast Barrier Islands and Coastal Marshes ecoregion and within U.S. Geological Survey Hydrologic Unit Code 12040205 (Austin-Oyster) or 12090401 (San Bernard). For example, the applicant could consider their property adjacent to Oyster Creek identified as Beneficial Use Site D in their Environmental Analysis document, dated June, 2018.
- The USACE – Galveston District re-coordinate this project with a 30-day public notice to allow resource agencies and other members of the public an opportunity to review and comment on the revised compensatory mitigation plan.

TPWD requests the applicant continue to coordinate with the resource agencies and other entities regarding beneficial use for disposal of maintenance dredge material.

Questions can be directed to Mr. Mike Morgan (281-534-0146) at the Dickinson Marine Lab.

Sincerely,



Rebecca Hensley
Regional Director, Ecosystem Resources Program
Coastal Fisheries Division

RH:CR:MNM

Attachment

References:

Crenwelge, G.W., J.D. Crout, E.L. Griffin, M.L. Golden, and J.K. Baker. 1981. Soil survey of Brazoria County, Texas. Soil Conservation Service, Washington D.C.

Elliott, L.F., D.D. Diamond, C.D. True, C.F. Blodgett, D. Pursell, D. German, and A. Treuer-Kuehn. 2014. Ecological Mapping Systems of Texas: Summary Report. Texas Parks & Wildlife Department, Austin, Texas.

Enwright, N.M., S.B. Hartley, M.G. Brasher, J.M. Visser, M.K. Mitchell, B.M. Ballard, M.W. Parr, B.R. Couvillion, and B.C. Wilson. 2014. Delineation of marsh types of the Texas coast from Corpus Christi Bay to the Sabine River in 2010. U.S. Geological Survey Scientific Investigations Report 2014-5110. U.S. Geological Survey, Reston, Virginia.

Plant species observed on September 7, 2018 at the proposed Freeport LNG dredge material placement area.

Common Name	Scientific Name
Saltmarsh bulrush	<i>Schoenoplectus robustus</i>
Saltgrass	<i>Distichlis spicata</i>
Saltwort	<i>Batis maritima</i>
Gulf cordgrass	<i>Spartina spartinae</i>
Marshhay cordgrass	<i>Spartina patens</i>
Annual glasswort	<i>Salicornia bigelovii</i>
Annual seepweed	<i>Suaeda linearis</i>
Carolina wolfberry	<i>Limonium carolinianum</i>
Sea-ox-eye daisy	<i>Borrchia frutescens</i>
High-tide bush	<i>Iva frutescens</i>